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# THE TEXT OF HABAKKUK

CHAP. I, 1—II, 4.

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY  
OF TORONTO FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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## The Text of Habakkuk.

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### CHAP. I, 1—II, 4.

The Book of Habakkuk occupies a unique place in Old Testament prophecy. Its author is conspicuous among those who have sought solutions for some of the most vexing problems of life, and hence his prophecy is characterized by a breadth of outlook to which few of those illustrious men who guided the spiritual fortunes of Israel attained; but, like a large part of the Old Testament, and especially the poetic books, it has suffered from textual corruption. Corruptions may have originated through resemblance in form of some characters of the ancient alphabet causing substitution of one letter for another; through dictation and oral transmission when words of different letters but of similar sound were confused; through errors in revision of MSS, carelessness in transcription, alteration and explanatory glosses by translators and scribes; through incorrect division of words, dittography, or omission of words or letters.

#### AIDS TOWARD DETERMINING THE TEXT:—

Naturally our main recourse for the restitution of the text is the ancient versions, each of which had its own original differing more or less from the MT. For purposes of textual criticism the LXX takes precedence (to which are to be added the versions of Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion); then follow in order the Syriac, Vulgate, Arabic and Ethiopic. But an invaluable factor in the text, and one which has not hitherto received merited attention, is the metre. That the prophets wrote in poetical form is now almost universally conceded by modern

n. a.

scholars. Chaps. I and II of this prophecy reveal pronouncedly the parallelism, the variable word-order, the alliteration and the rhythmical measures which are characteristic of Hebrew poetry. The poet, however, allowed himself considerable latitude in his form of expression, often varying the length of lines in accordance with his emotion, consequently there may not be absolute uniformity of measure in any given number of strophes, and even a single strophe may contain more than one measure; but parallel lines should be of equal length or similar measure, and, therefore, metrical tests are of the utmost importance in the detection of dittography or of omission of words.

The measurement of Hebrew poetry is not made by syllables but by stresses on words or on word groups<sup>1</sup>, unaccented syllables as in English, not being stressed; short unemphasized words may or may not be counted, while on the other hand even a secondary accent may mark a foot. These considerations will explain the apparent irregularity in the number of stresses found in some lines. Whether prophetic poetry was chanted or not, we may be assured that the form of it rests on recitative standards, and we can, therefore, use metrical canons with a reasonable degree of certainty.

The measures found in the passage under consideration are mainly trimeter. There are a few tetrameter lines and some pentameters—sometimes erroneously called "Qinah" metre because of its prevalence in the Book of Lamentations. The lines or *stichoi* are usually combined to form strophes. That there is a strophic arrangement of more or less completeness and regularity in this prophecy is attested by the recurrence of a refrain in Chap. II (assuming in the meantime that Chaps. I and II are a unit). Whether or not this refrain is genuine does not affect the question; its existence confirms the contention that

<sup>1</sup>When two or more words are joined by *maqquph* the group has often the metrical value of a single word.

there was intended to be a strophic structure. Moreover, the pauses in the progress of thought, which are apparent throughout these chapters, can hardly be accidental.



## TEXT IN STICHOMETRIC ARRANGEMENT:—

1 המשא אשר הזה חבקוק הנביא

## STROPHE I.

2 עד אנה יהוה שועתי ולא תשמע  
 אצעק אליך חמס ולא תושיע  
 3 למה תראני און ועמל אביט  
 שד וחמס לנגדי ריב ומרון  
 4 על כן תפוג תורה  
 ולא יצא לנצח משפט  
 כי רשע מכתיר הצדיק  
 ויצא משפט מעקל

## STROPHE II.

5 ראו כגדים והביטו  
 והתמהו תמוה  
 כי אפעל פעל בימיכם  
 לא תאמינו כי יספר  
 6 הנני מקים את כשדים  
 חגוי חמר והנמהר  
 החולך למרחבי ארץ  
 לרשת משכנות לא לו

## STROPHE III.

7 אים ונורא הוא  
 ממנו משפטו ושאתו  
 8 קלו מנמרים סוסיו  
 וחדו מזאבי ערב  
 פרשיו מרחוק יעפו  
 כנשר חש לאכול  
 9 כלה לחמס יבאו  
 ויאסף כחול שבי



## TRANSLATION :—

- 1 The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw.

## I

- 2 How long, O Jehovah, do I cry  
And Thou dost not hear ?  
I cry unto Thee, Outrage !  
And Thou dost not deliver.
- 3 Why dost Thou cause me to see evil ?  
And trouble I look upon,  
Spoiling and outrage are before me,  
Strife and contention.
- 4 Therefore benumbed is the Torah,  
And justice never goes forth ;  
For the wicked circumvents the righteous,  
And justice comes out perverted.

## II.

- 5 See, ye transgressors, and consider,  
And be utterly astonished ;  
For I am working a work in your days,  
Which ye will not credit when it is told ;
- 6 For behold I am raising up the Chaldeans,  
That ruthless and restless nation,  
Which marches over the breadths of the earth,  
To possess dwellings not his own.

## III.

- 7 Awesome and fearsome is he ;  
From himself are his right and his majesty,
- 8 And his horses are swifter than leopards,  
And keener than wolves of the evening.  
His horsemen fly from afar,  
Like the vulture that hastens to gorge.
- 9 Every one of them comes for outrage,  
And he sweeps up captives like sand.

## STROPHE IV.

10 והוא במלכים יתקלם  
 ורונים משחק לו  
 הוא לכל מבצר ישחק  
 ויצבר עפר וילכדה  
 11 אז יהליף רוחו ויעבר  
 וישם כחו לאלחו  
 14 ויעשה אדם כרגי הים  
 כרמש לא מושל בו

## STROPHE V.

15 כלה בחכה יעלה  
 ויגרוהו בחרמו  
 ויאספהו במכמרתו  
 על כן ישמח ויגיל  
 16 על כן יזבח לחרמו  
 ויקטיר למכמרתו  
 כי בהמה שמן חלקו  
 ומאכלו בריא

## STROPHE VI.

12 הלוא אתה מקדם  
 יהוה אלהי קדשי  
 13 שחור עינים מראות רע  
 והביט אל עמל לא תוכל  
 למה תביט בבגדים תחריש  
 בבלע רשע צדיק ממנו  
 17 העולם יריק חרבו  
 תמיד יהרג גוים

## IV.

- 10 And as for him, at kings he mocks,  
 And princes are to him a sport,  
 And at every fortress he laughs,  
 And he heaps up earthworks and takes it.
- 11 Then he quickens his ardor and marches on,  
 And makes his might his God,
- 14 And he treats men like fish of the sea,  
 Like the creeping thing which has no ruler over it.

## V.

- 15 He lifts all of them with his angle;  
 Draws them in with his net,  
 And sweeps them up with his seine;  
 Therefore he rejoices and exults,
- 16 Therefore he sacrifices to his net,  
 And burns incense to his seine;  
 For by them is his portion fat,  
 And his food made rich.

## VI.

- 12 Art Thou not from of old,  
 Jehovah, my Holy God?
- 13 Purer of eyes than to behold evil,  
 And to look upon sin Thou art not able,  
 Why dost Thou look upon transgressors, keeping silence  
 While the wicked swallows up the man more righteous  
 than he?
- 17 Shall he forever draw his sword,  
 Shall he slay nations continually?



## STROPHE VII.

Ch. 2.

1 על משמרתִי אעמדה  
 ואחיצבה על מצפי  
 ואצפה לראות מה ידבר בי  
 וכמו ישוב על תוכחתי  
 2 ויענני יהיה ויאמר

## STROPHE VIII.

כתב חזון ובאר  
 למען ירוץ קורא בו  
 3 כי עוד חזון למועד  
 ויסח לקץ לא יכוב  
 אם יתמהמה חכה לו  
 כי בא יבא לא יאחר  
 4 הנה רשע לא יושע  
 וצדיק באמונתו יהיה

## CHAP. II.

## VII.

- 1 At my post will I stand,  
And upon my watchtower set myself,  
And I will look forth to see what He will say to me,  
And what He will return to my plaint.

2 And Jehovah answered me and said,

## VIII.

- Write the vision and make it plain,  
That one may run as he reads it;  
3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time,  
It hastens to its end and will not deceive,  
If it tarry wait for it,  
For it shall surely come, and shall not delay.  
4 Behold ! the wicked man shall not save himself,  
But the righteous shall survive by his steadfastness.

## ANALYSIS OF THE SECTION :—

This passage consists of eight strophes, composed for the most part of octasticha, and, with a few exceptions, in trimeter lines.

Strophe I comprises vv. 2, 3 and 4, vv. 2 and 3 consist of four pentameter lines, and v. 4 of four trimeters, the combination of different measures in one strophe being of frequent occurrence<sup>1</sup> (cf. Ps. 8, vv. 4 and 5). This strophe contains the prophet's appeal to Jehovah for the rectification of existing wrongs. These wrongs indicate by their character that they are domestic. Parallels to the conditions portrayed here are to be found in Jer. 11, 18, 12, 6, 15, 10—12, etc., and although these passages refer to personal injustice, they furnish a strong argument for the contention that the oppression was internal.

Strophe II begins with the announcement of the Chaldeans as Jehovah's instruments of judgment on the wrong-doers, and ends with a characterization of Chaldean ruthlessness, impetuosity and rapacity.

Strophes III, IV, and V continue the description, emphasizing their self-exaltation, the irresistibility of their cavalry, their inhumanity, arrogance, and deification of brute force. All these strophes consist of trimeter lines.

Strophe VI comprises vv. 12, 13 and 17 (v. 13 in tetrameters). Vv. 12 and 13 are obviously misplaced in the MT., interposing a break in the sequence of thought, but when removed to their present position<sup>2</sup> the thought flows evenly from the introduction of the Chaldeans in v. 5 to the end of v. 16.

This rearrangement is simple and free from the objections which attach to that of Wellhausen, Giesebrecht, Budde, etc., their explanation being that certain verses were transposed by design; this presupposes that the misplacement arose through accident. With this slight alteration the sequence is clear. After the

<sup>1</sup>This is a common phenomenon in English poetry, e.g., the closing chorus of *Samson Agonistes* contains 14 lines, 8 of the normal eight syllables, 2 of seven syllables, and 4 of ten, irregularly arranged.

<sup>2</sup>W. B. Stevenson (*Expositor* 1902, p. 388 *f.*) places these vv. after v. 4.



prophet's expostulation (vv. 2—4) he receives the announcement of the Chaldeans, but as he reflects on the greater impiety of the instrument he boldly challenges the effectiveness of Jehovah's moral government of the world. How can a moral Being employ an immoral agent for the execution of His purpose and permit it to work its fell designs indefinitely? The problem can only be solved by patience and faith.

In Strophe VII he ascends his watch-tower and awaits his answer. This strophe is an exception to the octastich arrangement, having only four lines.

In Strophe VIII (vv. 2, 3 and 4) the assurance of an answer is followed by the inscription which is a statement of Habakkuk's philosophy of history and which places him in the front rank among spiritual seers. Although the text of 4 is so corrupt the general meaning of the verse is clear, viz., the immortality of righteousness and the impermanency of evil. The triumph of stupendous iniquity is a triumph in appearance only, evil is potential wreck, wrong holds in it the germs of destruction, it gradually ripens into putrescence and self-combustion in obedience to a necessity which is absolute. V. 4 is, therefore, a "moral postulate"—to use Wellhausen's pregnant phrase—which indicates the breadth of the prophet's outlook.

#### THE ARGUMENT OF CHAPS. I AND II.—

Here the utmost diversity of opinion prevails. Broadly speaking, there are two main interpretations: one represented by Giesebrecht,<sup>1</sup> Wellhausen,<sup>2</sup> Nowack,<sup>3</sup> Budde,<sup>4</sup> Cornill,<sup>5</sup> and G. A. Smith;<sup>6</sup> the other by Davidson,<sup>7</sup> Driver,<sup>8</sup> McCurdy,<sup>9</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Beiträge zur Jesaiakritik.

<sup>2</sup> Die Kleinen Propheten.

<sup>3</sup> Die Kleinen Propheten.

<sup>4</sup> Theol. Stud. u. Krit., 1893, pp. 383 f. Expositor 1895, pp. 372 f.

<sup>5</sup> The Prophets of Israel.

<sup>6</sup> The Book of the Twelve Prophets, Vol. II.

<sup>7</sup> Camb. Bible, Habakkuk.

<sup>8</sup> Introd. to the Literature of the O.T.

<sup>9</sup> History, Prophecy and the Monuments, Vol. III, pp. 211 f.

Kirkpatrick.<sup>1</sup> The first group differ among themselves in their arrangement of these chapters, and in their identification of the oppressor,<sup>2</sup> but agree that the wrongs complained of in Chap. I, vv. 2-4 are inflicted by some foreign power. The prophet raises his complaint that Jehovah does not intervene to rectify the oppression and consequent perversion of justice which are everywhere prevalent. The  $\text{עוֹרֵץ}$  (a foreign power) oppresses the  $\text{יְהוּדָה}$  (Judah) and the result is torpor of the Torah and moral chaos. On this hypothesis vv. 5-11 of Chap. I must either be elided altogether as being an earlier oracle, or else transposed. Budde<sup>3</sup> places I, 6-11 after II, 4, and makes the following arrangement: I, 2-4; 12-17; II, 1-4; I, 6-11; II, 5. Vv. 12-17 of Ch. I are, in his opinion, so closely connected in language and tone with vv. 2-4 that they must form their continuation. He then makes vv. 15 ff. supply the interpretation of vv. 2-4, and concludes that the oppressor is a foreign power. The prophet, therefore, seeing the prevailing injustice and oppression, complains of the indifference and non-intervention of Jehovah, and receives his answer that the Chaldeans are being raised up for the execution of punishment on the oppressor—the Assyrian.

Such a view presents insuperable difficulties. Budde's answer to the objection that the oppressor's name is not mentioned in Ch. I, vv. 2-4 is, to say the least, strange, viz., that it was impolitic to mention names, and, moreover, that Judah knew to whom the reference applied. This is the sheerest triviality, for, if the reference was so patent to Judah the oppressed, why

<sup>1</sup>The Doctrine of the Prophets.

<sup>2</sup>Giesbrecht regards I, 5-11 as an early oracle announcing the coming of the Chaldeans "under the form of the Scythians." He holds that Chap. I, 2-4, 12-17, 8 refers to the Chaldeans, but that it was written during the exile. Wellhausen follows Giesbrecht, but thinks that this part is pre-exilic, and Nowack accepts Wellhausen's conclusions.

Marti (Dodekapropheten) and Rothstein (Theol. Stud. u. Krit. 1894, pp. 51 ff.) maintain that vv. 2-4 of Ch. I refer to internal conditions, but they delete and transpose with great arbitrariness, the former assigning to Heb. only vv. 5-11 of Chap. I, and placing the date of Ch. I, 2-4, 12, 13, II, 1-4, in the 2nd cent. B.C.

<sup>3</sup>His arrangement and interpretation are accepted by Cornill, and substantially by G. A. Smith.

was it not equally clear to Assyria the oppressor? Granting, however, that the Assyrians were the oppressors, could they have perverted justice to the extent and in the manner described, or could the ramifications of their power have been so minute and absolute as to hinder the exercise of the Torah? In the usage of the prophets "Torah" is a technical term of the current traditional religion. "A Torah is any decision or instruction on matters of law and conduct given by sacred authority. The priests are they who handle the Torah; cf. Jer. 2, 8, 18, 18."<sup>1</sup> With this conception of Torah is it reasonable to suppose that the Assyrians or any foreign power could be held responsible for its perversion?

With any unprejudiced reading of vv. 2-4 it is difficult to attach any other meaning to them than that which finds a reference to oppression and perversion of justice within the kingdom itself, an interpretation which receives additional confirmation by the legal terms *רִיב* and *מִדּוֹן*. Nowack, who is aware of the difficulty raised by these words, would obviate it by excising them altogether—a method of procedure more facile than convincing. Vv. 2-4 can only be made refer to the Assyrians by reading into them a meaning derived from the remote context of vv. 15 ff. Moreover, v. 5 furnishes a continuation of v. 4 as natural as that of v. 12; in vv. 2-4 the prophet complains of the excesses of certain violators of law and order; and in v. 5 he, as spokesman of Jehovah, addresses these transgressors (*בְּנֵי רִיב*) and announces the coming retribution. But the view of those who would attach vv. 12 ff. directly to v. 4 is weakened by the important consideration that only a part of section 12-17, viz. 12-13, could by any possibility of clear interpretation form a close continuation of v. 4.

On Budde's hypothesis the date must be earlier than the description of the Chaldeans warrants; it is evident that their methods of warfare were well known, but such familiarity would have been impossible till after the destruction of Nineveh (if it took part in it, which is questionable), or at least till after the

<sup>1</sup>Robertson Smith, O.T. in Jew. Ch., 1st Ed. p. 292.



battle of Carchemish, 605 B.C. According to the date assigned to the prophecy by Budde (circa 615 B.C.) the Chaldean power would have been in existence but ten years, and it is extremely improbable that their characteristic methods of warfare were then known; as a matter of fact their prowess was unknown in western lands until it became suddenly manifest at Carchemish.

The conditions portrayed in vv. 2-4 would not accord with any part of Josiah's reign and especially with the closing years. It was but a short time prior to the date fixed by Budde that the "Law" was discovered in the Temple, and immediately afterwards there followed those reforms which made Josiah's reign notable. The Torah could not then be characterized as torpid because this was precisely the time in the history of the Hebrew monarchy when the Torah was most dominant. Moreover, the power of Assyria had begun to decline long prior to 615 B.C.<sup>1</sup> When Josiah came to the throne there were already signs of decay, and the peace and prosperity which characterized his reign—and especially the closing years of it—were possible because of this decline. It had given him an opportunity to extend the boundary of his kingdom and had enabled Necho to seize the whole of the empire west of the Euphrates.

An unbiased view of Ch. I, vv. 2-4 would place the date somewhere in the reign of Jehoiakim, and conditions almost unequivocally point to the latter part of that disastrous régime. After the fall of Josiah at Megiddo, Judah entered on a fateful era; the reformation inaugurated by that ruler was suspended, and Jehoiakim, selfish, vain and irreligious, led the nation into a night from which it was never to emerge. The old idolatry asserted itself, and the worst and most benighted days of Judah were repeated; and following hard on the defection of king and people there came those inevitable abuses which had so often stained the history of Israel and Judah. In his reign the Torah undoubtedly became numb and justice perverted. "Judah's shepherds became brutish and ceased to enquire of the Lord."

<sup>1</sup>See McCurdy, *Hist. Proph. and Mon.*, Vol. II, §§ 809, 811, 821, 822.

Luxury at the expense of the poor made life for them well-nigh intolerable. The king himself set the example of rapacious luxuriousness; the tribute which had been exacted justly and unjustly was utilized for the erection of magnificent palaces; the people were ground beneath a despotic rule; and with despotism came its concomitants, luxury and oppression.

Such was the condition in which Habakkuk found himself; and as the contravention of righteousness and national stability threatened themselves upon his mind, he, with patriotic desire for his nation's welfare, and with hot zeal for the honor of his God, gives expression to his impatience at the existence and continuance of such abuses.

This leads us to a consideration of the second interpretation, which, in the opinion of the writer, carries greater reasonableness. On his view the wrongs (vv. 2-4) are internal, inflicted by members of the Jewish community; the oppressors are the *עוֹלָם* and the sufferers the *צַדִּיק*. This condition of affairs fills the prophet with sad wonderment. How could a righteous God regard with indifference such moral anomalies in His world? Were the weak to be forever trampled, were the violators of law and order to go unpunished? And to his pathetic plaint the answer comes: God is raising up the Chaldeans (i.e., raising them up for a specific work, not calling them into existence) to be the vindicator of righteousness. It is a people ruthless and restless; marching against the land unchecked and irresistible, all opposition is to the sweep of its triumphal progress; fired with the lust of conquest it hastens like the vulture to its gorging; it laughs at the feeble efforts of men to stay its progress, neither *רָמָה* nor fortress impedes its march of terror and triumph; riot in blood and pillage it sweeps like a devastating whirlwind over the earth. Thus the Nemesis of justice is on its way to vindicate the rule of eternal righteousness.

Such is the answer that comes to the prophet; but it is far far from satisfactory; because it is inconceivable to his ethical sense that such an instrument should be employed and itself go

unscathed. That this ruthless and force-defying power should be permitted to work its godless will unhindered was surely wickedness being punished by grosser wickedness. How comes this inexplicable contradiction between the idea of God as it lay in the prophet's mind and the distorted image of God reflected in the disorder of the world? He does not question the ethicalness of Jehovah's character (Ch. I, vv. 12, 13), but his very faith breeds in him a holy scepticism. His deathless optimism intensifies the problem—it is unthinkable that Jehovah can look with indifference on the friction, the pathos, the tragedy which are so pervasive.

He will ascend to his watch-tower and await his answer. It comes, and with it the command to sound it forth. He is directed to write it down, not merely as a maxim applicable within the circumscribed limits of the temporary and the local, but as an immutable axiom, an irrefragable principle for all time, that Jehovah lives, regnant, watchful, and nothing that is unlike him can endure, Jehovah will come and lay a heavy hand on the instrument itself, because it, too, has contravened his moral law, Jehovah who is the vindicator of the moral order—a moral order which binds together unbreakably sin and punishment. The prophet then arraigns the Chaldeans for their arrogance. They laugh at the fallen and sweep with pride and cruelty over the earth; but side by side with galloping steeds and the triumphant march of mailed men goes Jehovah; and the Nemesis of history, which may be swift or slow but which is always sure, attends. And, as if in answer to their brutal laughter, the irony of Providence will mock the mockers. Spoil for spoil, blood for blood, taunt for taunt, such is the content of a series of taunt-songs which are embodied in Ch. II. ver. 5 to the end.

Unquestionably this interpretation is not free from difficulties, but they are neither as many nor as formidable as those which spring from the hypothesis that the oppressor was some external power.



One or two objections may be noted :—

It has been urged that national disaster is no direct remedy for social evils. To this the plain answer is that nothing is clearer in the prophets than that national disaster often came as punishment for such evils. A large portion of the book of Amos is explicit on this point, and Isaiah also emphasizes it (cf. Ch. 6, 12, 13 and especially chapter 10). The questions have been asked, (1) If the prophet complains of injustice in Israel, how can he consistently complain of those who have been called to avenge that injustice? (2) Why speak of Israel's oppression at all in a prophecy directed against the Chaldeans?

To both these questions one answer may be given, viz., that Habakkuk was more reflective than any of his predecessors, and whilst his prophecy is conditioned by a particular situation, it is not restricted to any particular event. His is a difficulty of a larger kind. To his ethical mind all injustice and impiety are abhorrent whether in Judah or elsewhere.

There are also certain other considerations which tend to minify the difficulties of the traditional view. The extreme condensation of the prophecy and the sententiousness of the prophet would account in large measure for the abrupt transitions and loose connexions which some critics find so perplexing. It is one thing to maintain that transitions appear abrupt to us and quite another that they were abrupt to Habakkuk's contemporaries. Those to whom he addressed himself were conversant with existing circumstances which would not be familiar to later times. It is also of primary importance to remember that the genius of the Hebrew was neither as reflective nor as logical as that of the Occidental. He expressed himself—especially in poetry—in a series of intuitions rather than in logical continuity. This consideration must be taken into account in any rational study of Hebrew literature and especially of Hebrew poetry. With this in mind we shall not demand the smooth sequences of Western thought and expression.

A further vindication of this interpretation will appear in the following notes.

## NOTES ON THE TEXT:—

## CHAP. I.

1. מִשָּׂא, which is often translated "burden," means properly "oracle" or "utterance"; literally, "what one lifts up with the voice."

2. חֲמָם, this is probably an exclamation, *cf.* Job. 19, 7. The word does not necessarily imply violence, *cf.* Gen. 18, 5.

3. For תָּבִיט we must read אָבִיט—I gaze upon. So Syr. and Arab. This word has not a causative force in Hiph. although Ewald<sup>1</sup> gives it such a force here. This, however, is the only instance relied on. Omit the unpoetical ן before שָׁר; so LXX., Syr. and Targ. Delete וִירִי and יִשָּׂא, they are probably scribal additions; besides their weakness in such a strong context, they overburden the metre; their removal makes vv. 2 and 3 a tetrastich of pentameters. רִיב וּמְדוֹן, these words indicate troubles within the community. Nowack's proposal to reject them is purely arbitrary.

4. תָּפֹג, root פֹּג to be inert, *cf.* Gen. 45, 26, Ps. 77, 3. The LXX. has *διονέδασται*, and since this word is frequently used to translate פָּרַר, some suggest תָּפַר as a substitute for

תָּפֹג. The Syr. supports the MT., and the suitability of the word is unquestionable (*cf.* the noun stem in Lam. 2, 18, "Give not thyself surcease."). For מִכְתִּיר Nowack would read מְכַרִּית, presumably to lend weight to his theory that the oppressor was a foreign power, but this word is too strong for the context which implies oppression rather than destruction. The LXX. also is more favorable to the MT. כָּתַר has the sense of surrounding or circumventing in a hostile sense (though in Piel) in Ps. 22, 13, Jud. 20, 43. In 4<sup>d</sup> ן should be substituted for עַל־כֵּן which is dittography from 4<sup>a</sup> and makes the line too long.

<sup>1</sup>Gram. §122.

STROPHE II.

V. 5. Following the LXX., Syr., S', Z' we must read בְּנָרִים for כְּנוּרִים of Is. 24, 16. This reading best accords with the context and furnishes a smooth connexion with v. 4. Probably תְּמוֹה should be read for תְּמָה, this being a much more common syntactical usage.

כִּי פִעַל פִּעַל. This phrase as it stands is incomplete having no subject, and some emendation is demanded; it is necessary either to insert אֲנִי or, which is more probable, to read כִּי אִפְעַל פִּעַל, the explanation of the change being that אִ had dropped out because of its proximity to the י which it closely resembled in the ancient alphabet; with this agree the LXX. and Syr. This verse would be unintelligible addressed to the Assyrian or to any foreign power. The statement that the Assyrian would not believe the announcement of punishment from Jehovah is needless since he neither recognized Jehovah's sovereignty nor feared His power; but addressed to the violaters of law and order within the Kingdom it is quite applicable. Persistent refusal to believe that Jehovah would permit any calamity to befall them at the hands of a foreign power had always been characteristic of Israel. Budde escapes the difficulty by arbitrarily rejecting the verse.

6. Delete כִּי, it is dittography from 5°.

STROPHE III.

V. 7. יֵצֵא is superfluous. It is not required by the construction and mars the uniformity of the metre. Moreover, it weakens the meaning since the emphasis is on מִמֶּנּוּ; being part of a well-established phrase it was probably the addition of a scribe or translator. This is the more likely seeing that the word had been used twice in ver. 4 in connexion with מִשְׁפָּט. Marti would reject וְשִׁאֲתוּ and the suffix of מִשְׁפָּטוֹ but his reasons for so doing are not convincing.

8. The ך may be rejected before קָלוּ וּפְרָשׁוּ, obviously there is dittography here; the LXX. and Syr. read פְּרָשׁוּ only once. וּפְרָשׁוּ must, therefore be struck out.

פ'שיו must be rejected also as being dittography from פ'שיו. It is a word of rare occurrence, and it is doubtful if it can be used with reference to horsemen. It conveys no meaning here either literally or figuratively, and metrically makes a superfluous foot. יבא may be dropped also. The redundancy is not consistent with the style of Habakkuk, who did not use excessive verbiage (cf. Syr.). It weakens the vividness of the figure and is probably dittography from יבא in the following line.

9. The text is exceedingly corrupt and the versions furnish no assistance, for 9<sup>b</sup> the LXX. and Σ. had different readings.

מנמת פניהם קרימה, this phrase cannot be translated.

No explanation can be given of מנמת. Most commentators do not attempt a translation and those who have endeavored to find a satisfactory reading have failed. נמם has the meaning of "gathering" or "striving after," which would have no relevancy to קרימה and פניהם. קרימה also is unintelligible, this army would not have its face toward the east. Some suggest קרימה = forward and substitute משים for מנמת, but this is pointless and unsatisfactory. The phrase should probably be rejected as being an interpolation, and moreover, its retention would give a tristich instead of a distich which elsewhere does not occur in the poem. With יאסף read י conjunct. in accordance with the context.

#### STROPHE IV.

10. מבצר is masc. and requires the m.a.s. suffix; read therefore ילכרה. י conjunct. must be read with both verbs in this line.

11. Several changes are necessary in this verse; the sequence of the tenses is irregular and the meaning of the passage very obscure; the perfects must become imperfects in conformity with the context. We must, therefore, read או יחליף רוחו - then he quickens his ardor. אשם is unintelligible although it occurs in most of the versions; the sudden introduction of a piece of

moralizing into such a vivid description is weak and unnatural; read with Wellh. וַיֵּשֶׁם (this is another instance of the interchange of ׀ and ׀). ׀ must be rejected, it is nearly always a relative particle and as such would no place here; moreover, it is dittography from ׀ in 11<sup>a</sup>. 11<sup>b</sup> therefore reads "and makes his might his god." This is the characterization of the arrogant conqueror in v. 7; here it is repeated in more explicit terms. Budde finds in ׀שׁ the ruins of אֶשׁוּר—an attempt to support his theory which is far from convincing.

14. In the preceding vv. the Chaldean's character and methods of warfare have been depicted: he is ruthless and turbulent, fierce and cruel, his cavalry is irresistible, he captures cities and laughs at kings; now the prophet turns to his treatment of mankind at large. Read with Nowack וַיַּעֲשֶׂה and change ׀ consec. to ׀ conjunct. (so LXX. and Vulg.); this continues the description. With the above emendation the sequence of thought flows uninterruptedly. G. A. Smith retains the reading of the MT., and therefore directs the prophet's complaint against Jehovah; but the reference throughout vv. 14-16 is more obviously to the Chaldean who, like a fisherman, sweeps mankind into his net.

#### STROPHE V.

15. Read וַיַּעֲשֶׂה and supply ׀ before יַנְרִיחֵהוּ.

16. Read בְּרִיאַ, a masc. adj. is required in agreement with מַאֲכָלוֹ.

#### STROPHE VI.

It has been rightly felt by most critics that vv. 12 and 13 are out of place in the MT. since they are expostulatory—addressed to Jehovah—and stand in a context which is descriptive of the Chaldeans; but the slight transposition which has been here made gives a clear sequence to the preceding and furnishes a reasonable introduction to the succeeding verses.

\*NOTE.—Unless otherwise indicated, the subdivisions of the verses are marked throughout these notes, a, b, c, d, according to the metrical lines and not according to the MT. division.



V. 12. It is better to read **קדשי** for **סדשי**.

**לא נמות**. If this phrase is to be retained we must read **חמות**. This is one of the "tikkune sopherim," the explanation of the change being that the idea of Jehovah dying was so repugnant to the scribes that they would not write the phrase even to negative it.<sup>1</sup> It is better, however, to reject it; it has every indication of being an explanatory gloss, and, moreover, it interferes with the regularity of the metre. Rothstein, Wellhausen, Nowack, Marti and G. A. Smith reject the latter half of v. 12 in the MT. as an interpolation of a later hand. It undoubtedly looks suspicious since it anticipates the solution of the problem given in 2, 4. If it is to be retained **צור** must be changed to **צורי** as a synonymous vocative to **יהיה**.

13. Read **בבנרים** (the **ב** implying satisfaction *cf.* Ps. 92, 12) and take **תהריש** as a circumstantial imperfect. Much of the difficulty which attaches to the interpretation of the whole passage under consideration centres in v. 13. To whom do the words **רשע** and **צדיק** refer? It is urged by those who find in vv. 2-4 a reference to a foreign oppressor that these words denote the same persons as in v. 4, or rather, since the **רשע** of v. 13 evidently refers to the Chaldeans, it is argued that the reference in v. 4 must be to the Chaldeans also; but the words are exceedingly common, and the implication that because they occur in the same chapter they must therefore have the same reference is purely arbitrary. Moreover, if these words point to the same persons in vv. 4 and 13, why not make **בנרים** refer to the same persons as in v. 5? This, of course, is impossible, since the word is here used of the Chaldeans, and it cannot have the other reference. The **צדיק** must be either Judah or all who were the objects of Chaldean cruelty. The prophet's perplexity is a moral one; he recognizes the oppressor as an instrument, but the instrument is more unrighteous than those on whom it was sent to execute judgment, therefore he expostu-

<sup>1</sup>*Cf.* Robertson Smith, *O. Test. in Jew. Ch.*, 1st Ed., p. 78.

lates with Jehovah for His apparent indifference to the successful impiety of the conquerors.

17. This verse continues the complaint. Read with Giesebr and Wellh. העולם יריק הרבו. One LXX. MS. has *μάχαιραν* *abroû* (cf. Field). The idea of the fisherman emptying his net is meaningless, whereas הריק הרבו is a standing phrase for drawing a sword, cf. Ezek. 5, 2, etc. Read יחרג (so Wellh.). לא יחמול may be deleted as being a scribal addition intended to heighten the effect of the expression and based on such phrases as Is. 30, 14, Jer. 21, 7, Job 6, 10, etc. Moreover his words make the second stichos of unequal length with the first. The difficulty in the metrical division, as well as in the style has been felt by Sievers.<sup>1</sup>

#### CHAP. II.—STROPHE VII.

1. The prophet having given expression to his complaint, now ascends his watch tower to await the explanation of conditions which challenge Jehovah's moral government.

For the unusual form מצור it is best, following Is. 21, 8, to read מצפי כי = to me, cf. Hos. 1, 2, Zach. 1, 9. 14. etc. Read ישיב for אשיב, so Syr. and Targ.

#### STROPHE VIII.

2. על הלחות may be struck out, it is a scribal addition, cf. Is. 30, 8, where a corresponding phrase is rejected as a gloss by Duhm, Cheyne and Marti.

3. In this verse the prophet's faith is rewarded, the vindication of righteousness may not be immediate but it is certain. For יפה Bredenkamp, Budde, Kautzsch, Oort, Wellhausen and Nowack would read יפרה translating the reading of the LXX. *ἀνατελεῖ* thus. The Vulg. has "apparebit." פוח = to breathe, strive for, fig. to hasten has virtually the meaning of "apparebit" in Cent. 2, 17. We must retain the present reading (unless with

<sup>1</sup> Metrische Studien, Vol. I., p. 491.

Martí we change to יפיר), or else read יופיע = will come to light; the latter would give a proper equivalent to *ἀφανεῖται* and "apparebit," and a parallel might be found in Ps. 12, 6, where a similar change is necessary (cf. Baethgen ad loc.). The ך before לא may be omitted, the clause being circumstantial.

4. This verse contains the inscription, but it is unfortunate that the text is so corrupt. The meaning of 4<sup>b</sup> is clear. The difficulty centres in 4<sup>a</sup>. It is evident that the clauses are in antithetic parallelism and antitheses must, therefore, be found for צדיק and also for באמונתו יחיה, but עפלה neither furnishes the one nor לא ישרה נפשו בו the other. The LXX. which reads ἐν ὑποστολήται, οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐν αὐτῷ is not relevant to the context and renders no assistance. Aq. reads *παχλεινομένου*, and Bredekamp, following this, suggests הנעלה, which does not give the required antithesis to יחיה. For עפלה the Targum had רשעים and Syr. 'awla, either of which would be antithetic to צדיק. Some word which will meet the requirements of the context must be substituted for ישרה, which may be rejected for the reason mentioned above. נפשו and בו are both dittography, the former from 5<sup>c</sup> and the latter from 3<sup>d</sup>. The following reading would give a reasonable parallel to 4<sup>b</sup> and also satisfy the demands of the metre: הנה רשע לא יאשע, the last word having been distorted into ישרה.

Another division of the prophecy begins with v. 5, which contains one of a series of woes pronounced upon the oppressor.



